European Partnership for Democracy

MGGB

Making Good Governance Better

www.epd.eu

European Partnership for Democracy

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About EPD

The European Partnership for Democracy **(EPD)** is a network with a **global remit to support democracy**. In 2008, several organisations came together to create EPD as a partnership to reinforce European democracy support by building a **community** that advocates and acts for **democratic values around the world**. EPD works inside and outside Europe because we recognise that **democracy is a universal aspiration** and that the contemporary challenges and opportunities for democracy are global in scope.

Through innovative and collaborative methodologies based on the development of effective partnerships with civil society organisations and democratic stakeholders, EPD facilitates the exchange of knowledge and good practices around the world. EPD's membership is active in over 100 countries and has implemented over 200 projects in the field of democracy support (often funded by EU Member States and the EU institutions).

Executive summary

Support to democratic governance remains a central element of international development. In the context of continued global democratic backsliding, the European Union (EU) and other donors, including EU member states, have clearly signalled their commitment to counter such trends. The reinvigorated global rally behind democracy in multilateral fora,exemplified by the Summit for Democracy, has the potential to give further momentum to these efforts.

To put such calls into practice, we, the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), and our membership have developed a new and comprehensive approach to democratic governance programming that combines the expertise of our member organisations.

Our approach is based on the belief that democracy support actions possess innate qualities to address the shortcomings of good governance support. Therefore, it serves as a basis for discussion with donors, particularly with the EU and EU member states, with a view to **jointly design programmes and projects that address the specific governance-related needs and opportunities in a given partner country** – for the current implementation period of the EU budget from 2021 to 2027.

The approach can be employed by our members in partnership **with one or more technical partners** to avoid the pitfalls of conventional and often too narrow (good) governance support. It proposes a more systematic integration of the democracy support sector with the predominantly technical domains of governance support. By leveraging evidence of successes and failures in international development and coupling this with a strong belief in not only the intrinsic, but also the instrumental value of democratic principles, the approach follows a vision of 'making good governance better.

Our approach focuses on the classic four dimensions of democratic governance: **responsiveness, participation, transparency, and accountability.** However, we view responsiveness as being supported by the other three pillars of democratic governance. Additionally, our approach targets a wider range of actors than is common in governance support programmes – both on the state and the non-state side. Instead of addressing each actor as a standalone entity, our members also incorporate the links between actors in their work.

Our comprehensive approach to democratic governance is designed for several EPD members to work in partnership – based on how their specialisations and experience match the identified priorities in a given context. Such multi-member cooperation guarantees that a wide range of themes and relevant actors can be addressed. Our approach functions best with the involvement of a technical partner[1] with a strong track record in governance support.

1 Suitable organisations include the development agencies of EU member states as well as international organisations, like the World Bank or OECD.

01. Why MGGB?

01. Why MGGB?

Where does the EU stand today?

Support for **governance** has long been a part of the EU's development cooperation portfolio.[2] At the outset, this was primarily structured as technical assistance to government officials in partner countries. In the mid-1990s, the oft-cited 'governance turn' in development cooperation gained considerable momentum and led to the further professionalisation and consolidation of the governance support sector.

At the same time, against the backdrop of numerous democratic transformation processes around the world, governance support changed its framing: Governance support programmes were now broadened to encompass the respect for human rights and the rule of law. The resulting concept of **good governance** became an essential element in the EU's international development policy – first mentioned in an EU policy document in 1994.[3] Since then, the EU has provided significant amounts of funding to partner countries in view of solving governance challenges, incorporating principles of good governance more than it had before.

In parallel, the EU, like other donors, has also given much support to democratic processes, particularly in the context of elections, as well as to democratic institutions and actors, such as civil society, media, and parliaments. This type of engagement is today commonly known as **democracy support.**

Both good governance and democracy are often understood as forming part of **democratic governance**, including by the EU. There is indeed considerable overlap; however, as will be argued further below (see section 3), our approach posits that there are important reasons to not equate good governance with democratic governance.

2 Although many different definitions exist, at the most general level, governance can be described as the process of making and implementing decisions. Or, in other words, it is "the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority at all levels in the management of a country's affairs" (Praia City Group on Governance Statistics (2020): Handbook on Governance Statistics. p. 3.).

3 Arts, Karin (2000): Integrating Human Rights into Development Cooperation: The Case of the Lomé Convention. p. 190

As of today, the **need to strengthen democratic governance is strongly reflected in EU development policy documents.** The Council Conclusions on Democracy (2019), the subsequent EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy or in the European Democracy Action Plan (both 2020) are recent examples of this.

It is therefore not surprising that this is also the case for the EU's current financial instrument for development cooperation – Global Europe: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (Global Europe) – makes repeated references to democratic governance (and to good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights).

One the one hand, the EU supports core areas of democracy, particularly by engaging non-state actors, in dedicated thematic programmes within Global Europe. This includes the programme on 'Human Rights and Democracy' – the successor to the previous European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) – and the programme on 'Civil Society Organisations'. Such support can also unfold in challenging, authoritarian contexts.

On the other hand, the EU also strengthens human rights, democracy and good governance in the instrument's geographic pillar. At least 15% of the funding made available by the pillar shall tackle these priorities. This is crucial, not only because of the pillar's financial size (it contains roughly three quarters of the almost €80 billion that are made available by the instrument for the 2021 to 2027 period), but also because related envelopes are based on bilateral agreements with partner countries.

It is in the geographic pillar where there is huge potential for democratic governance. Where executive governments have ownership and seek to engage on governance matters through their agencies, ministries and authorities, comprehensive initiatives can be forged that address all actors in a democratic system. These stand opposed to programming that is more fragmented and supports non-state actors, where any meaningful collaboration with the state on democratic governance is out of the question. **These bilateral programmes are therefore key to achieving the EU's vision for democratic governance, if they are leveraged to the full extent and go a decisive step beyond a narrow focus on promoting good governance.**

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What are the shortcomings of governance support?

Governance support, regardless of its form, has not been without criticism. Such criticism has been primarily concerned with scepticism over its effectiveness. But the claim that governance support is by and large ineffective can be rejected; research shows that it can contribute to change – if it is delivered in the 'right' way and under the 'right' circumstances.[6] At the macro level, studies also suggest that governance support is particularly effective where it focuses on the elements that differentiate democratic governance support from good governance support, e.g. where it provides support to non-state actors contributing to civic space, clean elections, or free media.[7] At the micro level, however, a mixed evidence base exists and there are indeed cases where governance programmes have failed, or in other words, have not achieved the objectives they set out to achieve.

But what is the 'right way' of providing governance support? **Why do some governance programmes fail where others succeed?** These are difficult questions to answer, and have kept academics and development practitioners busy for years.

Our approach aligns with those who recognise that **political context and power relations in a country are key factors** in determining the success of any development intervention, particularly those addressing governance processes.[8] It is therefore important to design programmes in a way that allows the identification of key drivers and obstacles to reform and to subsequently work with all implicated stakeholders.

Donors have often been critiqued for insufficiently differentiating between vastly different contexts, paying too little attention to politics and avoiding incorporating power considerations into their governance programming.[9] In particular, the managerial/technical approach to improving governance processes fails to recognise that in all types of political environment, including hybrid and authoritarian ones, governance processes are inherently political.

A core insight has been that relations between the state, its citizens and other social actors are key determinants of the causes and solutions to poor governance.[10] Policy arenas range from formal institutional spaces such as parliaments, courts, intergovernmental organisations and government agencies, to traditional arenas such as local councils, or informal arenas such as old boys' networks and backroom deal-making.

Bargaining and power relations between social groups impact how governance unfolds. Donors – including the World Bank itself – have also internalised such insights and have attempted to rethink programming in the sector. In a recent definition, the World Bank emphasises the observation that both state and non-state actors are involved in policy making and implementation processes.[11] **Who is and is not included in governance processes significantly determines the scope and substance of agreed policy solutions, as well as their chances of success.**

6 Hackenesch, Cristine (2016): Good Governance in EU External Relations: What role for development policy in a changing international context? European Parliament. Directorate-General for External Policies. p. 15.
7 Niño-Zarazúa, Miguel; Rachel M. Gisselquist, Ana Horigoshi, Melissa Samarin, and Kunal Sen (2020): Effects of Swedish and International Democracy Aid, EBA Report 2020:07, the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA). p. 133. Available here.
8 Carothers, Thomas and Diane de Gramont (2013): Development Aid Confronts Politics: The Almost Revolution.
9 Unsworth, Sue (2015): It's the politics! Can donors rise to the challenge? In: Whaites, Alan et al. (2015): A Governance Practitioner's Notebook. Alternative Ideas and Approaches. OECD.
10 Institute of Development Studies (2010): An Upside-down View of Governance, p. 12
11 World Bank (2017): World Development Report 2017. p. 3.

Yet the technical and state-centred approach of governance support in its early days has had a lasting effect. Support still typically revolves around executive government actors exclusively, for example in large institution-building and public sector reform programmes, without strategically involving or supporting other actors. Resorting to a technical focus on state capacity therefore risks higher probabilities of ineffective programming, and even detrimental effects on both development and democracy. In numerous cases, particularly where aid dependency is high, governance programmes have effectively strengthened authoritarian governments, particularly through public sector support programmes accompanied by budget support.[12]

A conclusion of this lack of progress on democratic elements of a governance system has led researchers to draw the lesson "to never focus solely on reform internal to government systems without considering how participation, transparency and accountability will also be promoted."[13]

12 Hagman, Tobias and Filip Reyntjens (2016) Aid and Authoritarianism. Development without Democracy.
13 ODI (2021): Twenty years of UK governance programmes in Nigeria: achievements, challenges, lessons and implications for future support, p. ix. Available here.

How to make good governance better?

Our approach is based on the belief that democracy support actions possess innate qualities to address the shortcomings of good governance support. Going beyond good governance support and transforming it to democratic governance support by incorporating elements of democracy support is a central step towards avoiding the recurring failures of governance support programmes.

As was alluded to above, the lines between good governance support and democratic governance support are blurry. Development practitioners and academics alike have often struggled to pinpoint clear definitions of these different types and combinations of interventions. However, good governance and democratic governance are not interchangeable terms and do carry distinct meanings.

It helps to give a closer look at both good governance support and democracy support first: **Good governance support**, particularly in the EU context, has primarily concentrated on the effective and efficient functioning of the state. Public sector reform and public service delivery are preferred support areas. Many programmes exist to strengthen public finance management (PFM) – this includes the state's budget planning, formulation and execution, revenue management, auditing, etc. – as well as public administration reform (PAR). Often PFM and PAR programmes are coupled with budget support to the partner government. Sectoral governance support, for example in the agriculture, trade, security, energy, water, health, education sectors, is another important support area. Justice sector and decentralisation programmes are also often considered as good governance support.

Democracy support aims to improve democracy through strengthening democratic institutions as well as democratic values. It includes support to parliaments, political parties, media actors, civil society, and citizens. Support for elections traditionally holds a prominent space in the democracy support portfolio, where support is offered to electoral management bodies, regulators, international, national and citizen observers, etc. Other areas of democracy support include aid for civil and political rights, local authorities as well as the rule of law.

On this basis, **democratic governance can now be understood as the realm where good governance and democracy support intersect.** Democratic governance encompasses the principled functioning of the state, but also emphasises the importance of democratic norms, processes and institutions to policy making and centres citizens in the process.

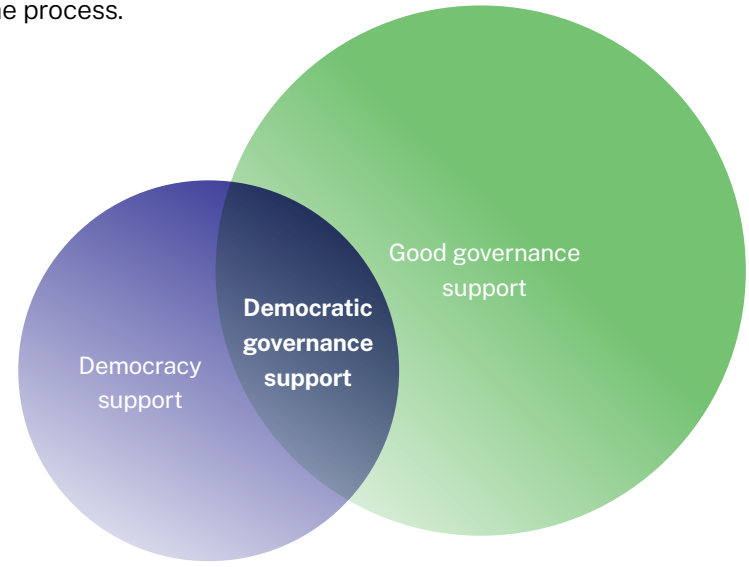
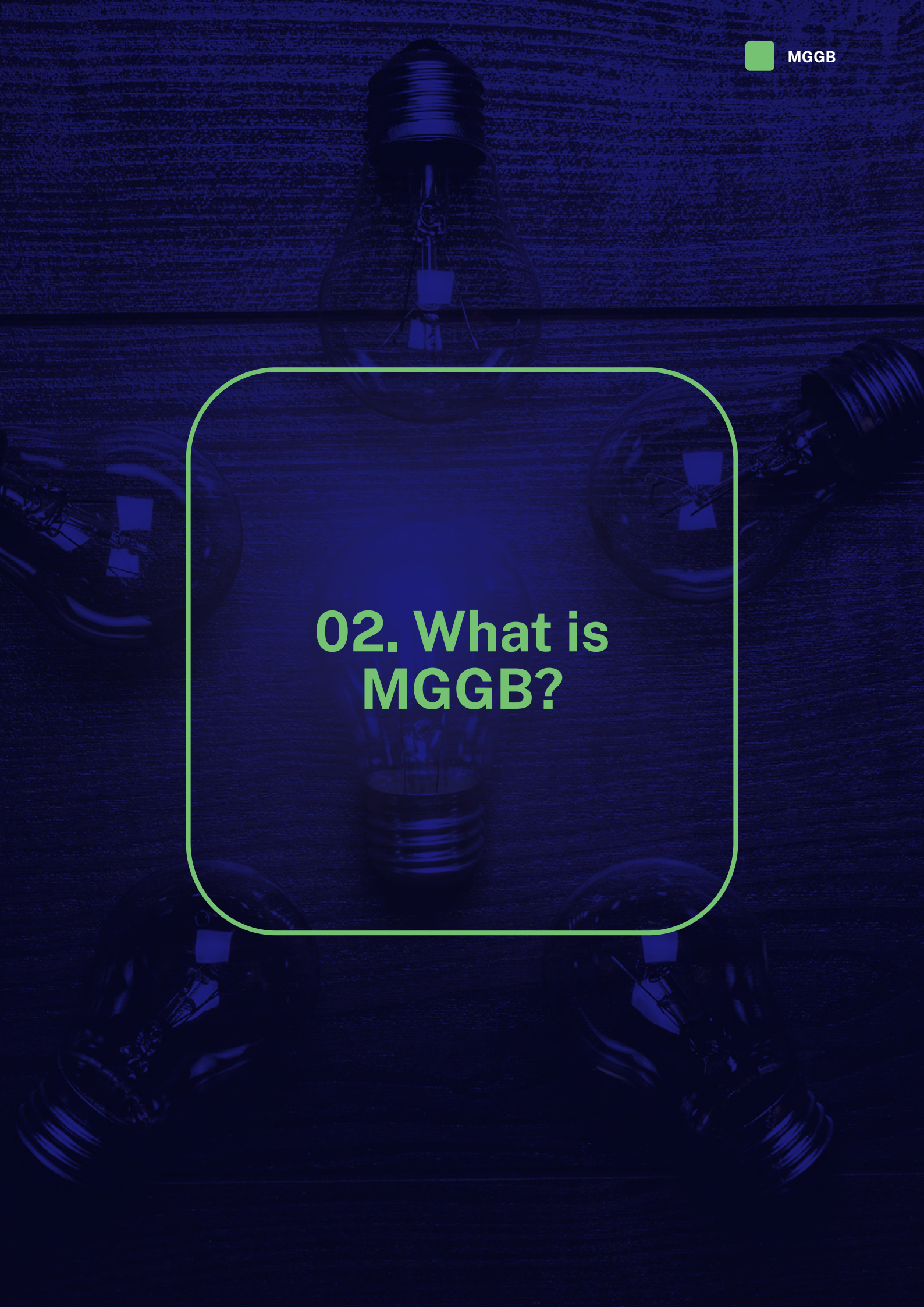


Figure 1: Democratic governance support as the intersection of democracy support and good governance support

In this area, where democracy support and good governance support overlap, both sectors can mutually benefit each other. By integrating elements of democracy support into good governance programmes, several of the shortcomings mentioned in the previous section can be addressed.

By definition, democracy support aims to include all stakeholders that should be involved in democratic processes. An exclusive focus on state actors is therefore not possible. Other actors need to be systematically included in support programmes. As will be explained further below, non-state actors have a multitude of roles in a country's governance processes. Parliaments, for example, have a central role of overseeing the spending of public resources by executive governments. Political parties, especially if their members have been elected into public office, can represent the interests of parts of society that are neglected by dominant executives. Civil society organisations can represent citizens' interests around specific issues and provide concrete expertise on particular societal problems. Media actors are central for keeping the public informed and report on potential mismanagement on the side of the government.

Similarly, democracy support actions fundamentally rely on understanding the dynamics of a country's inner power structures and political realities within which an intervention is implemented. Often a whole-of-society approach is followed. Approaching governance support from an angle of democratic governance can therefore make success more attainable, as well as more sustainable. Based on solid and recurring context analysis, democratic governance programmes are less likely to run counter to the will of citizens as well as of key actors within a given system.



02. What is MGGB?

02. What is the MGGB approach?

Our approach differentiates between four dimensions of democratic governance: **responsiveness, participation, transparency, and accountability.**[14]

Of these four dimensions, our approach assigns a special role for responsiveness –as it goes to the core of what good governance programmes commonly focus on.

Responsiveness describes **the extent to which governments and public bodies respond to the needs of citizens.** In other words, the policies developed and the services delivered by state actors need to address the will of the eople, while respecting fundamental rights and freedoms. The efficient and ffective management of public resources in order to attain objectives that are ollectively defined in democratic processes also forms a part of responsiveness. Further, responsiveness implies both the ability and willingness on the part of governments to gather information on citizens' needs, through consultation and otherwise, and to subsequently respond to those needs.

We view responsiveness as being supported by the other three pillars of democratic governance. We therefore support good governance programmes dedicated to responsiveness by adding on a strong focus on participation, transparency and accountability and on the dynamics in which these three dimensions enable responsiveness, thereby supporting democratic governance. We are convinced by the fact that interventions aimed at improving responsiveness have limited effectiveness unless they also improve participation, transparency, and accountability.

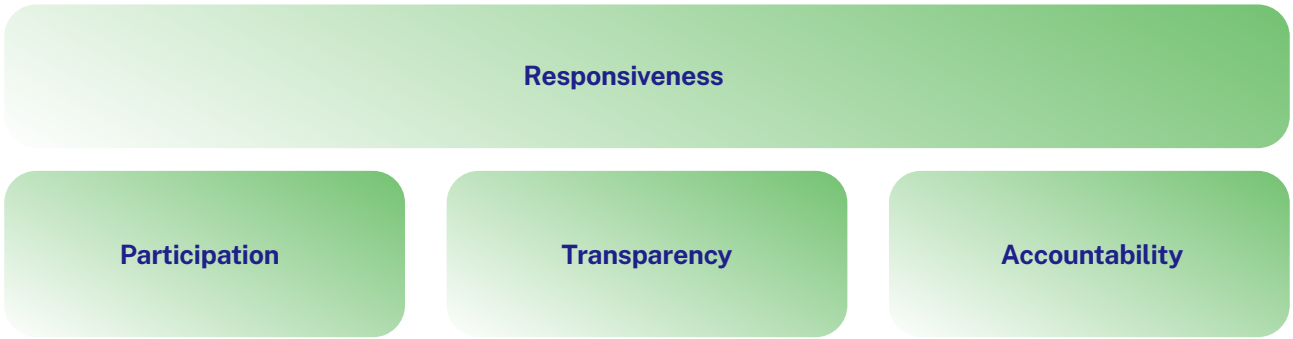


Figure 2: Dimensions/pillars of democratic governance

14 Despite the challenge of defining governance, development practitioners can actually revert to a multitude of different attempted conceptualisations. Long lists of key components of governance exist, ranging from openness, to coherence, to consistency, and others.

Our approach targets a wider range of actors than is common in governance support programmes. This includes – **on the state side** – ministries, public sector bodies and agencies, parliaments, national human rights institutions, courts, statistical bodies, executive leaders and public office holders. It also includes – **on the non-state side** – political parties and politicians, civil society organisations & civic initiatives, media actors, trade unions, private sector, human rights defenders and activists, cultural organisations and artists.

All these actors have particular roles in strengthening democratic governance (see Figure 2, below). Often such roles are highly complementary, even in those cases when the relations between certain actor groups can be more adversarial. However, **non-state actors are often insufficiently integrated into conventional good governance programming.** Our comprehensive approach makes a concerted effort to fill this gap and the ability to do so is a unique asset of our network.

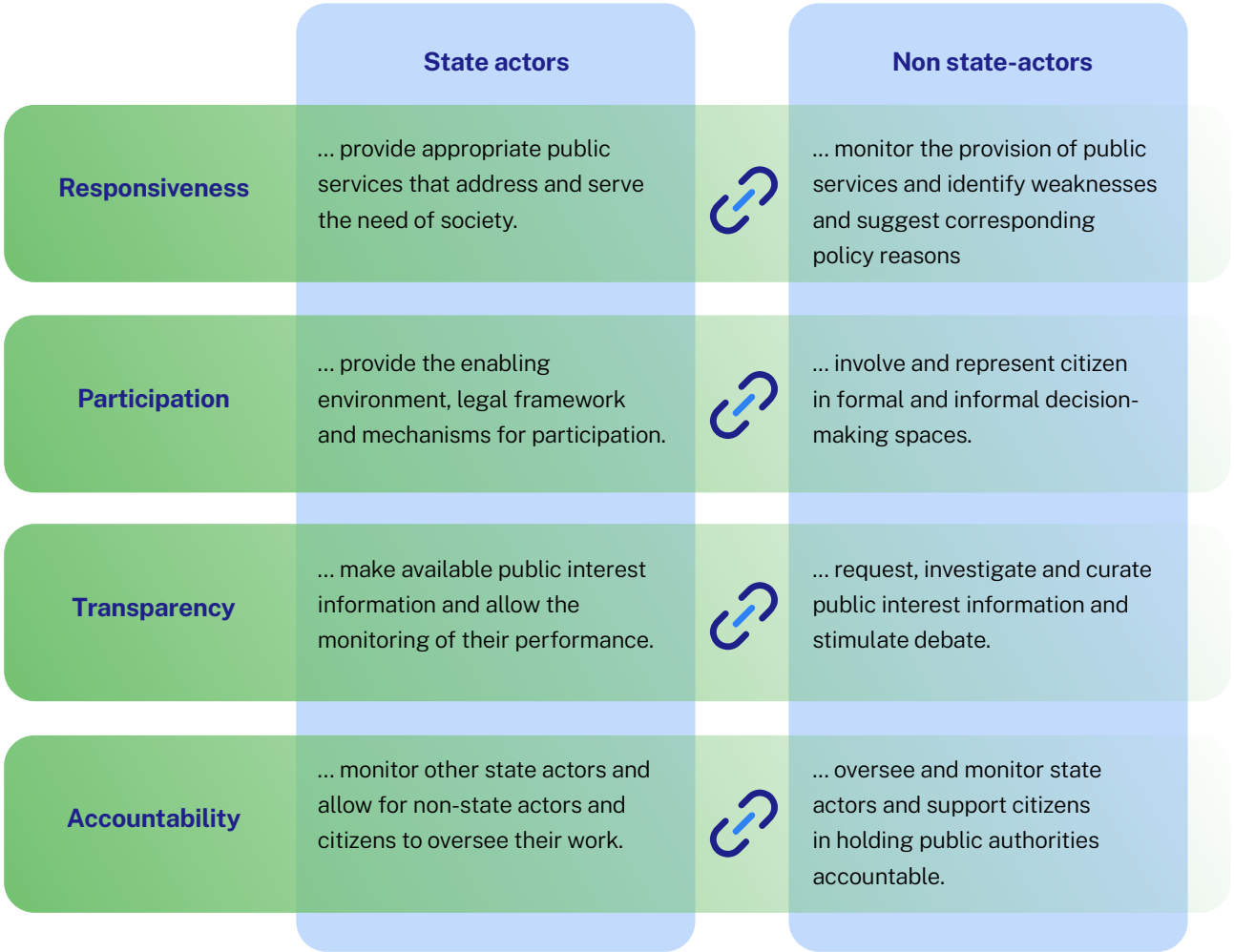


Figure 3: Examples of differing roles of state and non-state actors across four democratic governance dimensions

> **Responsiveness describes the extent to which governments and public bodies respond to the needs of citizens.**

Moreover, instead of addressing each actor as a standalone entity, our members also incorporate the **links between actors** in their work. Our work is centred around the importance of how different actors relate to each other. This is rooted in the idea that sustainable gains in democratic governance rely on a multi-stakeholder approach and cooperation between all implicated actors. For example, to encourage transparency in the use of public resources, it is key to understand the dynamics between civil servants in public administrations on the one hand, who publish spending data, and journalists on the other hand, who analyse such data and report on it.

Such links between social actors are of course not as straightforward as Figure 2 may suggest. Our approach considers that relations between two social actors are seldomly linear, but often mutually causative and interconnected with other social actors. How actors are juxtaposed and linked to each other must be understood and considered through thorough and iterative analysis (see further below). This analysis process also aids in identifying and supporting **coalitions of social actors** that, working in partnership, can drive forward sustainable changes in governance systems.

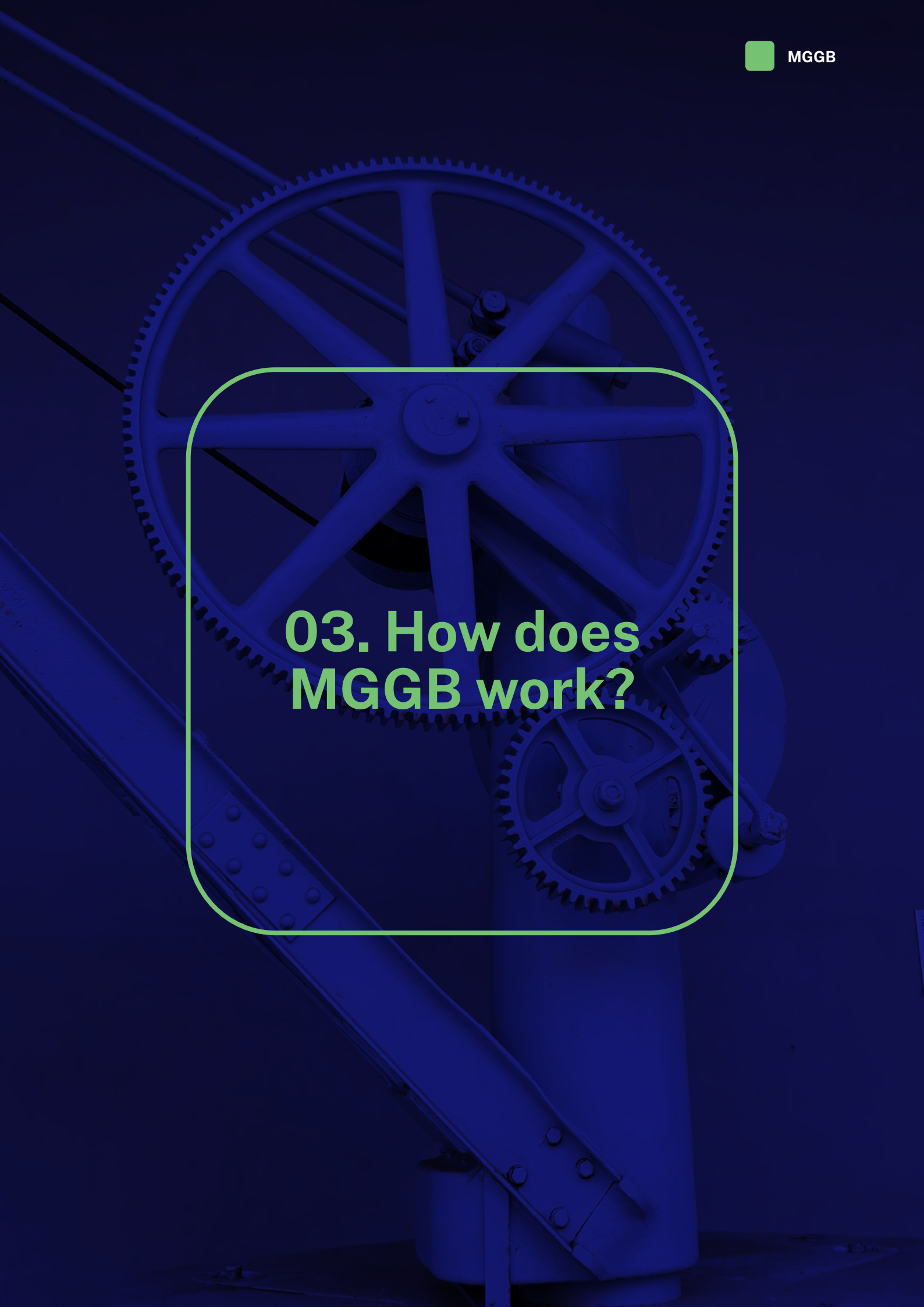
Our approach is aligned with the Rights-Based Approach (RBA)

Our approach is firmly rooted in the standards established by international human rights treaties. This means that any support given to governance processes must correspond to the needs of rights-holders, who are therefore integrated into our programming design stages and assessments. Similarly, the ability of duty-bearers to ensure the protection and promotion of such rights is a primary concern of our democratic governance programming.

Our approach also emphasises the importance of sustained behavioural change. This is based on an analysis of the incentives that drive state actors to implement reform. Like any social actor, state actors are frequently self-interested and their interests can often oppose the objectives of a democratic governance programme. Identifying how changes in incentives can lead to changes in behaviour means that programmes following our approach are designed for success.

Our approach enables analysis, learning and adapting

The expansion of political economy analysis (PEA) is crucial for governance programming in that it brings the complexity of politics to the centre of attention. PEA can help illuminate the way in which history, geopolitics, social and economic structures shape the governance system. It helps understand how formal and informal institutions all shape the political system and the incentives and behaviour of different groups and individuals within it. Accordingly, EPD members have increasingly developed and integrated PEA exercises in their ongoing programming. Exchange between EPD members on such issues has helped to make it a key component of our approach and thereby operationalising the shift towards thinking and working politically.



03. How does MGGB work?

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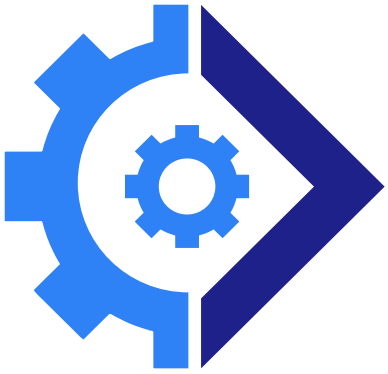
The sub-sections below introduce how our members' mandates and priorities align with the three enabling dimensions of democratic governance, i.e. participation, transparency, and accountability. This is further complemented by three spotlights on cross-cutting thematic issues – **'gender equality & inclusion', 'climate & environment', and 'digitalisation & innovation'.**



Dimensions of democratic governance

A. Participation

Participation ensures that citizens are able to engage in decision-making processes. It is based on the idea that those who will be affected by a particular decision should also have a say in the way that the decision comes about, and to initiate, support or stop certain decisions. Elections and referendums are the most visible and common channels of citizen participation, but other, formal and informal, channels of participation, for example public deliberation, are equally important.

The **direct engagement of citizens** in decision-making, both from 'the outside' (through the media or public campaigns) and 'the inside' (through citizen consultations and other opportunities where authorities solicit the views of citizens) can strengthen participation.

Programming example

In **Armenia**, from 2018-2020, the **European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)** reinforced citizen participation at the municipal level. ALDA involved citizens in participatory dialogue with local authorities and thereby created citizen-owned budgets in the economically important area of tourism and recreation. The initiative was financed by the EU.

In **Tunisia**, from 2017-2020, **ALDA** worked in six governorates to increase the participation of women at local level by giving them the means to fully access the public sphere – as voters and candidates, but also as empowered, informed and involved citizens in order to make the implementation of the decentralisation process a success for every citizen. The initiative was financed by the EU.

Civil society organisations are important actors for representing citizens' interest in **policy dialogue** with government actors. Civil society groups often tend to specialise in particular areas or represent a specific part of society. This knowledge and experience allows them to engage with government actors and contribute to policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Programming example

In **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia**, and **Moldova**, since 2020, **People in Need (PIN)** is strengthening the role of civil society organisations as trusted governance actors advancing the democratisation process in each respective country. PIN works to increase these organisations' accountability and effectiveness as drivers of change – by improving organisational capacity, by increasing civic engagement in policy dialogue; and by facilitating cooperation between civil society and the private sector. The initiative is financed by the EU.

In **Moldova**, from 2019-2021, **PIN** supported the development of a community-based planning mechanism based on real needs and available resources that allowed community-based civil society organisations to work in partnership with Moldova´s public administration to satisfy the basic social needs of vulnerable people. The initiative was financed by the Czech government.

Civic and political education builds citizens' understanding of how they can participate in decision-making and be effective in driving change. It thereby strengthens an active, engaged citizenry. Targeted education of young activists and politicians can have similar effects.

Programming example

In Tunisia, since 2012, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and Demo Finland, have been strengthening the skills of young politicians in the Tunisian School of Politics (TSoP), on subjects such as citizenship and civil rights; public administration and local government; and budgetary principles. TSoP has contributed to an increase in multiparty dialogue and cooperation in Tunisia. The initiative has been financed by the Dutch and Finnish governments.

Civil and political rights, such as the freedom of expression or the freedom of assembly, are essential conditions for citizen participation. The nature of these rights can be seen through a broad lens – not only do they impact citizens' actual ability to participate (for instance, the ability to speak publicly or organise a protest) but also how they view the risks of participation (such as a perceived legal or physical threat to themselves and others) and the perceived effectiveness of doing so (particularly in how they expect authorities, and other citizens to respond to their words or actions).

Programming example

In **Turkey**, from 2018-2020, **ARTICLE 19** supported national and international human rights bodies, journalists and politicians, as well as the broader public in advocating for authorities to protect the rights to freedom of expression and a fair trial. It promoted the use of international human rights standards in Turkish courts in order to counteract restrictions on civic space. The initiative was financed by the EU.

Support for **elections** is perhaps the most visible aspect of citizens' participation, particularly when it spans across the full electoral cycle. In some instances, it can be key to focus on electoral management as one component of a larger good governance reform agenda.

Programming example

In **Myanmar**, from 2014-2021, **Democracy Reporting International (DRI)**, in partnership with the **Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)**, the **Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), Demo Finland**, among others, supported electoral processes, including by strengthening the regulatory framework and electoral stakeholders, e.g. the election management body as well as political parties, civil society, and others. The initiative was financed by the EU.

In Europe's **Eastern Neighbourhood** and in Europe itself, **European Exchange** has been supporting citizen election observation since 2012. European Exchange holds the secretariat of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), which encourages, trains, and defends experts and citizens who stand up for transparent and equal suffrage wherever it is at risk. The initiative is financed by the EU and the German government, among others.

Across the **world**, since 2013, the **EDGE Foundation** has been deploying digital open-source solutions for electoral management. For example, for the Arab Electoral Management Bodies Network it developed an open-source digital platform for best-practice exchanges in the Arab region, including a dedicated application for instant messaging, surveying and comparative review of electoral legislation. This project was carried out in cooperation with UNDP.

B. Transparency

Transparency guarantees the ability of citizens to oversee the management of public affairs. It therefore allows citizens to scrutinise whether rules are ultimately respected. It is based on the principle that those who are affected by a decision ought to be able to understand how a decision was taken, what it entails and what effects it is likely to have.

A considerable focus within this dimension is on **access to information.** Public bodies often hold (or are entitled to hold) information that is of public value and should therefore be made available to the public. In that light, recent decades have seen a mushrooming of access to information legislation in countries across the world, which can ultimately increase the scope of information made available to the public.

Programming example

In **The Gambia**, since 2020, **ARTICLE 19**, as part of its support to a government-led reform process, supported a wide range of stakeholders, including the security sector, parliamentarians, civil society organisations and elected local government officials, to promote transparency and the enactment of an access to information law in the Gambia. As part of the drafting committee, ARTICLE 19 provided technical assistance to review the bill for its alignment with international standards. The Access to Information Bill was enacted by the Gambia National Assembly on 21 July 2021.

An enabling factor for implementation of such laws is the **capacity of institutions to collect and provide information.** Support to statistical offices, auditing institutions, and oversight bodies, including parliaments, can therefore help unlock access to information, particularly in scenarios where political willingness exists. Support to authorities at the local level often result in releasing information that is most pertinent for many citizens.

Similarly, even if information is disclosed, citizens need to know how and where to find or request information. Once new information is in their hands, citizens also often need to be supported to make sense of such data. The same is true for civil society organisations and their ability to make use of information to advance social causes. Often technology can be leveraged to support civil society, for example by uncovering and sorting data.

Programming example

In **12 francophone African countries**, CFI provided capacity building to leading figures from journalism and civil society on making use of open data, including by employing digital tools, and on facilitating data-driven action within their networks. The initiative was financed by the French government.

Another focus is laid on transparency in **political decision-making.** Measures such as lobby registers can curb the undisclosed influence of private interests. Effective implementation of campaign financing laws can move the scope of money channelled to political figures into public view – particularly ahead of elections. As political campaigning has moved more and more into the digital sphere, measures to create transparency on online ads are necessary. Investigative journalism and independent media can use such information to uncover cases where governance does not function in the public's best interest.

Transparency in the **public sector** is a central focus area, particularly in the context of anti-corruption work. It is through public service delivery (in areas such as health, education or urban management) that citizens most frequently come into contact with governance processes and where open and transparency procedures can help ensure that policy objectives are ultimately reached. Supporting codes of ethics as well as wealth and asset disclosure systems can incentivise integrity among public officials.

Programming example

In **Kenya**, since 2016, **ARTICLE 19** has been advocating for the effective implementation of the access to information laws and its regulations in the public sector. With civil society and journalist and media organisations it has conducted numerous sensitisation and training sessions for public officers on their roles in the implementation of the legislation. ARTICLE 19 also contributed to the development of an access-to-information curriculum that targeted chief executive officers, information-access officers, mid-and top-level directors, heads of human resources, and complaints handling committees within the public sector.

The practice of open budgeting in **public financial management** across the budget cycle helps to ensure that policies become monitorable – according to conventional criteria such as efficiency and effectiveness, but also principles such as gender responsiveness. This applies to all administrative levels, from the national to local, decentralised levels. Engagement with actors involved in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative is crucial.

Programming example

In **Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine**, since 2016, the **Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)** strengthened institutional capacity in government organisations. Civil servants were trained on public finance management, for example on the careful management of government spending, revenues, loans and debts. The initiative was financed by the Dutch government.

Concerning relations with the **private sector**, the management of oil, gas and mineral resources should be understood as a challenge that is inherently public and subject to democratic control and should therefore be as transparent as possible. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is a global effort supportive of such dynamics.

Programming example

In **Lebanon**, in 2020, the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)** conducted workshops with youth on advocacy for better governance within the oil and gas sectors. Young participants were coached to better advocate for policies that benefit broader society. The initiative was financed by the British government.

In **Mongolia, Myanmar** and **Kyrgyzstan**, in 2016, the **Oslo Center** promoted principles for good management and governance of natural resources. Based on Norwegian experiences with managing its oil and gas reserves, the Oslo Center exchanged with key stakeholders to promote a better, more prudent and transparent management of mineral resources. The initiative was financed by the Norwegian government.

C. Accountability

Accountability refers to the constraints on decision-makers' use of political power through potential sanctioning of that power or through requirements for justification of their actions. Accountability of a government can be seen through the lens of citizens (vertical accountability), state institutions (horizontal accountability), and non-state actors such as civil society and the media (diagonal accountability).

Support to **independent oversight bodies**, such as parliaments or national audit institutions, reinforces the effective separation of powers and the ability of such institutions to act as watchdogs. The more powerful such oversight bodies are, the more effective horizontal accountability can be, though there is a clear need of vigilance regarding such entities' independence and impartiality as well.

Programming example

In **Pakistan**, since 2012, the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)** has been strengthening federal and provincial legislatures with a current focus on promoting accountable politics. WFD assisted the parliament to scrutinise government performance through legislative and financial oversight mechanisms. This also involved the support for the development of the National Assembly Strategic Plan 2019-2023 for improved accountability and transparency. The initiative is financed by the British government.

In **Bangladesh**, since 2020, **ARTICLE 19** has been supporting the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in developing and implementing three research-based action plans on the safety and security of journalists and human rights defenders. These action plans addressed professional risks, threats, challenges, safety priorities, needs among other issues. Support to media actors and journalists is among the most crucial aspects of diagonal accountability, impacting not only citizens' ability to be informed about public decision-making but also the fact that the state is dis-incentivised to act against the public interest.

Support to **media actors and journalists** must look not only at de jure provisions (including media regulation), but also at cultural factors (for instance, a political culture which may imperil journalists and critics of the state) as well as structural issues (including availability of funding for media outlets and ownership structures impacting press independence).

Programming example

In **Benin**, from 2016-2020, **CFI** supported the media to enable citizen-led control of public initiatives. CFI helped media actors to facilitate dialogue and exchange between public authorities and civil society, so that issues of accountability could be reported, safeguarded and mediated. The initiative was financed by the French and German governments.

In **Tunisia**, from 2017-2019, ARTICLE 19 strengthened the skills of media stakeholders and civil society organisations within the media space. A particular focus was laid on the capacity of journalists to access and use information held by public institutions to analyse governance processes and hold authorities accountable. The initiative was financed by the EU.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia** and **Serbia**, since 2020, the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) has been enhancing cooperation between the judiciary (in particular the prosecution service) and journalists in ensuring safety for journalists and media actors. This initiative was financed by the Dutch government.

Accountability in **local governance** entails the availability of the aforementioned accountability mechanisms at the local context, as well as the strength of state, non-state and citizen actors at the local level which can counteract the impacts of 'distance' from the capital. The effectiveness of local governance accountability necessarily impacts citizen perceptions of accountability, as an effective local system will also generate the perception that justice is applied equally regardless of distance from the central state apparatus.

Programming example

In **Moldova**, from 2019-2021, the **European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)** provided assistance to local authorities to strengthen their performance and increase their accountability to the central government as well as citizens. This included initiatives for participatory policy-making in an overall context of decentralisation reform. The initiative was financed by the EU.

In **Lebanon**, Democracy Reporting International (DRI) supported municipalities in improving their relations with their citizens, their accountability and their service delivery. This also included working with the national parliament on improving local government legislation.

Supporting **strong and unbiased judicial systems** and the rule of law entails working with those institutions which can sanction wrongdoing. Support must ensure that judicial institutions are able to act independently of state and non-state influences, within a reasonable time, and that institutions have both the capacity and the will to act against illegality. In contexts where judicial institutions have been impacted by state interference consistently, support may also entail supporting renewal of the judicial system, and the generation of public trust in the entire system.

Programming example

In **Albania, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey**, and **Ukraine**, from 2017-2022, the **Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)** strengthened institutional capacity in the field of rule of law within government organisations. Through interactive training sessions combining theory, practical skills and study visits, policy advisors, members of the judiciary and other civil servants working in the government and justice sectors acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to drive reforms in their home countries. The initiative was financed by the Dutch government.

Crosscutting thematic spotlights

A. Gender equality & inclusion

Advancing gender equality and inclusion is a key factor in achieving more democratic governance processes. Multiple forms of discrimination against women have meant that they remain underrepresented in public life at all levels, across the world. The inclusion of **women in politics** can increase diversity and representativity in decision-making and thereby benefit society more generally.

Programming example

In **Nepal**, since 2012, the **Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)** has been supporting cooperation among major political parties. A key focus area is the role of women in society, for example by supporting female candidates in the run-up to elections or by facilitating multiparty debate on violence against women. The initiative is financed by the Danish government.

In **Iraq**, from 2017-2019, **elbarlament** supported female members of the National Council of Representatives as well as women from civil society, politics, academia and the legal profession to develop a joint vision for the future of their country. It involved these women peace processes, as well as in state-building on a local, regional, and national scale. The initiative was financed by the German government.

In **Zambia**, from 2018-2021, **Demo Finland** supported multi-party, inclusive platforms for female politicians at national and sub-national level. A recent evaluation identified that these platforms successfully offered a neutral safe space where women from different political backgrounds could interact and provide peer support to each other. A significant increase in trust and familiarity between political parties' women's wings was observed. The initiative was financed by the Finnish government.

Moreover, power or resource imbalances lead to the **underrepresentation of other social groups**, such as youth, minorities, and persons with disabilities. Our members employ tools and approaches to make governance processes more inclusive of all groups in society, particularly those that are most vulnerable and those that are most excluded from the state's decision-making processes.

Programming example

In **Kenya**, from 2020-2022, **Demo Finland**, in partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), supported political parties in considering the civil and political rights of persons with disabilities ahead of the general elections in 2022. The initiative was financed by the Finnish government.

In **Mali**, **Niger**, and **Burkina Faso**, from 2019-2022, **CFI** is supporting young people, media professionals, bloggers, civil society representatives and local authorities in publically advancing the social-political inclusion of youth. It uses the media as a vehicle for reliable information and public debate on related subjects. The initiative is financed by the French government.

In **Ukraine**, from 2020-2021, **Democracy Reporting International (DRI)**, strengthened youth's active engagement in policy processes. DRI trained young professionals and students in practices related to local governance and public services. The initiative was financed by the German government.

In the **Mediterranean region**, from 2018-2020, the **Club de Madrid** supported youth in shaping media narratives and public policy through the involvement of Club de Madrid members, democratically elected former heads of state and government, in youth-led policy debates. The initiative was financed by the EU.

B. Climate & environment

Climate change and **environmental threats** are among the most pressing challenges of our time. Important links to democratic governance exist: Policies that seek to address climate change and environmental threats need to be based on the wide participation of state and non-state actors to be effectively implemented and sustainable. Our members ensure that policy making as well as awareness-raising is based on scientific evidence and that those who are most at risk of negative impacts of climate change or environmental threats, for example rural populations, are sufficiently involved in policy-making.

Programming example

In **Georgia**, from 2021-2024, the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)** is supporting efforts to generate the sustained political will necessary to address environmental and climate issues in line with environmental democracy principles. WFD supports political actors to create legislation and policies that are evidence-based, inclusive and meet the commitments outlined in Georgia's Nationally Determined Contribution and other environmental commitments. The initiative is financed by the British government.

In **Iraq**, from 2020-2021, **elbarlament** promoted environmental awareness and supported inclusive policy-making with regard to water policy in Iraq. In its 'Clean Tigris' initiative it facilitated dialogue between city mayors and other decision makers, academics, civil society and artists living along Iraq's two main rivers Euphrates and Tigris and the Mesopotamian Marshes. This process sought to develop sustainable solutions to improve water quality & water management in the country. Further, in 2022, elbarlament conducted a feasibility of creating a climate and environment institute in the country. These initiatives were financed by the German government.

In **Mozambique**, since 2016, **Demo Finland** in partnership with the **Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)**, has been supporting the democratic governance of extractive industries and natural resources in the country. The aim of the programme is to enhance the oversight role of the parliament and six provincial assemblies on the extractive industries and to increase the capacity of elected representatives to assess the implementation of the existing legislation on natural resource management. The initiative is financed by the Finnish government.

In **Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya**, and **East Africa** more generally, from 2019-2021, the Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD) supported four nascent green Eastern African political parties through exchange of experiences and capacity building, so that these can contribute to inclusive and sustainable policy development, tackling environmental threats and climate change.

In **Ethiopia, Uganda**, and **Kenya**, from 2019-2022, **CFI** is strengthening the role of media outlets as tools for monitoring, raising awareness of and engaging in issues associated with climate change. It further encourages dialogue between the scientific community and civil society on climate change to enable evidence-based policy advocacy. The initiative is financed by the French government.

C. Digitalisation & innovation

Digitalisation is radically transforming governance processes worldwide. Government bodies, from ministries and public agencies to courts and parliaments, are using e-governance tools to overhaul the way that they engage with citizens. Civil and political society organisations are using digital processes to interact with members and voters. Media consumption has largely shifted online and journalists, bloggers and web activists shape significant parts of the public (online) discourse.

While digitalisation provides sweeping opportunities to strengthen democratic governance, and often offers entry points for changes in non-digital domains as well, it also presents dangers, particularly where it curtails the rights of citizens to privacy or freedom of expression.

Programming example

In **Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Jordan, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Comoros, Sudan**, and **Somalia**, since 2020, the **EDGE Foundation** supported the Arab Electoral Management Body (EMB) Network in its digital communications, coordination and capacity-building efforts in the region to facilitate the sharing and discussion of best practices to enhance inclusion and participation. The deployment of e-learning courses for the professionalisation of Electoral Management Bodies' (EMB) officers as well as other digital tools enables key electoral stakeholders to fulfil their roles efficiently, simplifying tasks and ensuring that technical resources are available throughout project cycles with an eye to sustainability and local ownership. This project is financed by UNDP.

In **French-speaking Africa**, since 2019, **CFI** has been working to promote the participation of young people and the citizen-led control of public action through digital tools. By promoting projects on civic tech and capacity building of young actors in this sector, the action aims at improving the knowledge and understanding of civic tech and at enhancing the ability of young people to network and implement and promote civic tech initiatives. This initiative is financed by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

In **Kenya**, since 2021, the **Kofi Annan Foundation** has been working to increase electoral integrity and confidence in Kenya's 2022 election–with a particular focus on the digital environment. This work aimed to increase ability amongst Kenyan election stakeholders to respond to the threats and opportunities presented by the internet, social media and tech to the electoral information environment. The initiative was financed by the United Nations.

04. Implementation

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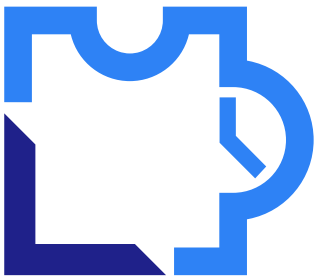

Our comprehensive approach to democratic governance is designed for **several EPD members to work in partnership** – matching their specialisations and experience to the identified priorities in a given context. This follows a larger trend in recent years towards increased joint action between two or more EPD members. Such multi-member cooperation guarantees that a wide range of themes and relevant actors can be addressed – as is required by our approach. In many cases such cooperation is coordinated by the EPD Secretariat itself.[15]

Our approach functions best with the **involvement of a technical partner[16] with a strong track record in governance support.** Our focus on participation, transparency and accountability complements the core work of the technical partner with expertise in focus areas such as public finance management, public sector reform, justice sector reform, decentralisation, or sector governance.

Different programme components should be jointly designed and implemented by the technical partner and EPD members in a complementary manner. This is particularly important when it comes to working with national partners and target groups. Such engagement needs to be based on a joint analysis of the drivers and obstacles to improved democratic governance and coordinated during programme implementation.

This arrangement allows for the coordinated cooperation between the technical governance sector, on the one hand, and the democracy support sector, on the other hand. As mentioned above, organisations of both sectors often work in parallel, but are not sufficiently aligned. Closer partnership allows all dimensions of democratic governance to be considered and addressed more systematically – increasing the prospects of success.

The work of EPD members is coordinated by a **Programme Management Unit (PMU)** – providing a clear point to the technical partner as well as members. The PMU, under the leadership of the leading EPD member organisation (identified on a case-by-case basis), is usually composed of the following: a Project Director; a Finance and Admin team; a Communication and Visibility team; and a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) team.

The PMU is the central coordinating body and is responsible for ensuring that the programme components deliver on their mandates and address the needs of the identified target groups in a coherent and inclusive manner. The technical partner regularly observes the meetings conducted by the PMU.

15 An example of such an arrangement is a recent media support and conflict prevention programme in Kyrgyzstan (2019-2022, EUR 2.9m, financed by the EU), in which three members – ALDA, ARTICLE 19 & WFD – worked together with national state and non-state actors, coordinated by the EPD Secretariat and with the support of an in-country management unit.

16 Suitable organisations include the development agencies of EU member states as well as international organisations, like the World Bank or Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

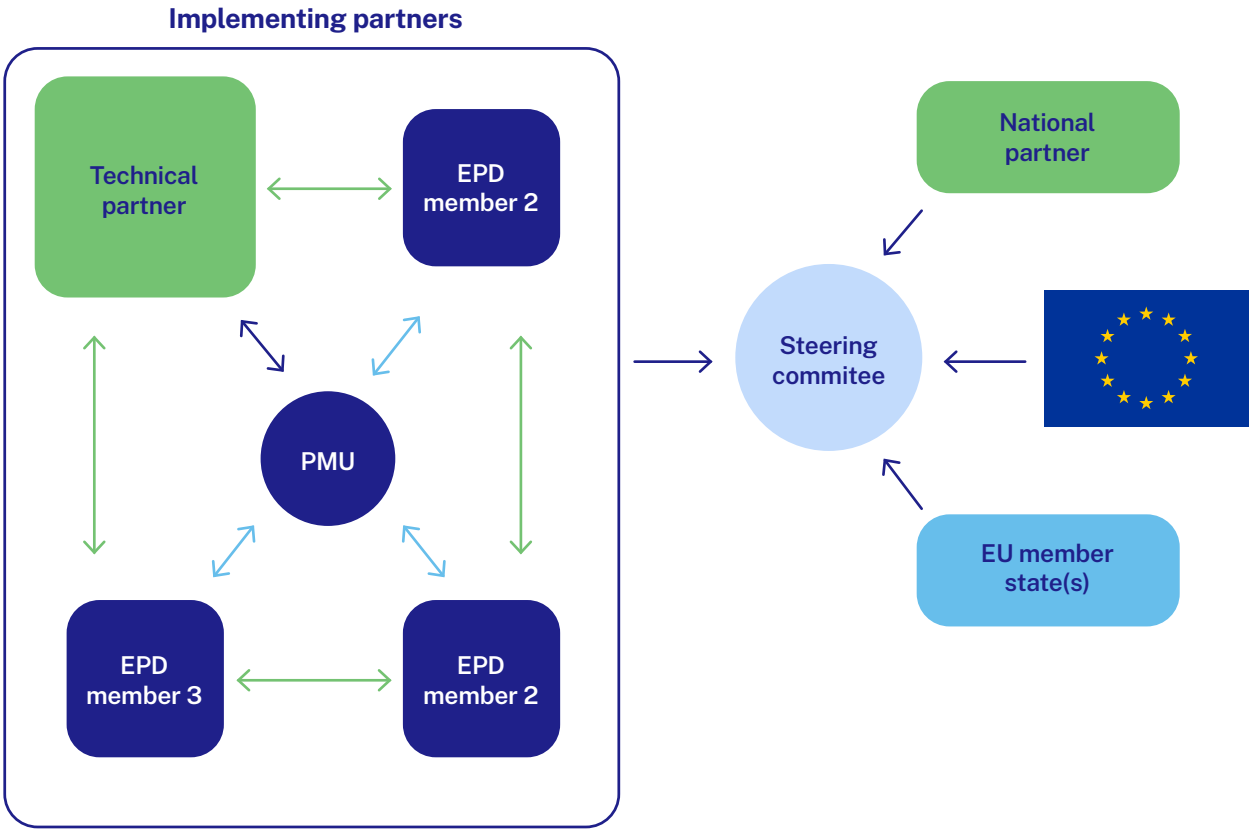

Figure 4: Exemplary organisational setup of a democratic governance programme following our approach

Programmatic work is carried out in several thematic components, each either linked to 1) a particular sector of support (public finance management, transport, education, health), 2) a dimension of democratic governance or one of the crosscutting thematic priorities, and/or 3) a social actor. This allows EPD members to oversee specific components of the programme in line with their expertise. The experience of EPD members in a particular region and/or country is also a key determinant of participation in a programme.

A Steering Committee that also includes representatives of the partner government and of the EU ensures national ownership and direction of the programme.

This structure is conceived based on lessons learned from the implementation of previous projects implemented by several EPD members. It benefits from the expertise of EPD members working together over the past decade around the world.

Our approach is ready for Team Europe

Our members are European and often work with the support of EU member states. Our programming is therefore able to represent the aspirations of the EU and EU member states and to achieve their political and policy objectives in the global context. Due to our cooperation with EU member states and their development agencies, we are also well placed to implement Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) in the field of democratic governance.

Annex: EPD members

EPD is a “Community of practice”: a group of organisations which work together to improve the way they operate in the realm of democracy support. This notion does not only apply to EPD as a network and its institutional development, but also to all the actions and partnerships constructed under the EPD banner.

Discover all EPD members by visiting https://epd.eu/members/.

MGGB

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